

This guide can help leaders structure participation in decision-making by clarifying where and how staff input can be most effectively included.

1. Break decisions into stages

Identify the current stage of the work or decision process:

- Problem identification
- Brainstorming
- Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation

This helps clarify where participation is most relevant and effective.

2. Match the level of participation to the decision

Identify who should be involved at each stage. The [Vroom-Yetton-Jago model](#) can help leaders determine the appropriate level of involvement by assessing:

- **Decision quality:** How important is it to make the best possible decision?
- **Team commitment:** How critical is staff buy-in for successful implementation?
- **Time constraints:** Is there enough time to involve others in the process?

3. Identify and communicate degree of influence

Clarify how much influence staff input will have, using the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation:

- **Informed:** Decision is communicated after it is made
- **Consulted:** Input is gathered but decision remains with leadership

- **Involved:** Input is considered throughout the process and shapes decisions
- **Collaborating:** Decisions are co-developed
- **Empowered:** Decision-making is delegated within clear boundaries

Participation only builds trust when the level of influence is clear and consistent.

4. Embed participation into daily work

Look for where participation already exists in practice. Consider:

- Where input is already being generated in real time
- Where decisions are shaped through informal dialogue
- Where feedback is present but not consistently acted upon

Strengthen what already exists rather than creating parallel systems.

5. Close the feedback loop

Ensure staff contributions are acknowledged and that they can see what happened with their input.

Communicate:

- What was identified
- What ideas were considered
- What decisions were made
- How implementation was shaped
- What was learned

Example: Decision Log Template

To support consistent participation and transparency, leaders can use a simple decision log to track how staff input is included across the decision process.

Area of work (e.g., psychological safety): _____

Stage	Participants	Level of influence	Method of participation
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem identification <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation	Specify relevant participants based on the scale and context of involvement (e.g., teams, individuals, programs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Informed <input type="checkbox"/> Consulted <input type="checkbox"/> Involved <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborating <input type="checkbox"/> Empowered	<input type="checkbox"/> Team meetings <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1 <input type="checkbox"/> Committees <input type="checkbox"/> Working groups <input type="checkbox"/> Real-time operational decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Debriefs <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

What was identified: _____

Ideas considered: _____

Decisions made: _____

How work was shaped: _____

What was learned: _____